

# Plenty of '85 coins made; wait and see

By Roger Boye

**T**his week's column answers more questions from Chicago Tribune readers.

**Q**—We've been looking for 1985 coins in the change we receive but have found just Lincoln cents so far. Is the government making other types of coins this year?

J.P., Skokie

**A**—Yes, and in huge quantities. But they will take longer than normal to reach circulation due to the large amount of 1984-dated coinage that remained in storage earlier this year. For many months, the U.S. economy has used less "hard money" than expected, leaving a glut of coins in government vaults.

**Q**—I've discovered some tiny letter-number combinations [such as "H3," "B1" or "G3"] on my dollar bills. Are they some type of code? They appear near the left margin on the front side of each bill.

R.H., Chicago

**A**—Uncle Sam prints currency on large sheets of paper, 32 bills at a time; those letter-number combinations indicate the precise position of each bill on its sheet. For example, a "1" identifies the first [or upper left] quadrant of the sheet, and the eight bills within that quadrant have their own numbering sequence, "A" through "H."

Your "H3" bill occupied the lower right-hand corner [position "H"] within the third [or upper right] quadrant of its sheet.

**Q**—You recently said that in 1984, the government spent about 60 cents to produce 100 Lincoln "pennies." How much do other coins cost to make? Is it wise to save new U.S. coins for their metal value?

S.C., Chicago Heights

**A**—The U.S. Mint spends about 2½ cents to make a nickel, less than 1½ cents per dime, three cents for a quarter and nearly six cents for a half dollar. Those prices include the value of the metal within each coin and all production costs.

It makes no sense to hoard coins from circulation given the current prices for copper and other base metals.

**Q**—I have a Kennedy half dollar with two dates, 1776 and 1976. I'm wondering if it's worth more than face value.

S.H., Chicago

**A**—For the Bicentennial in 1976, Uncle Sam issued millions of dual-dated quarters, half dollars and Eisenhower dollars. Many of those quarters and halves still circulate; they have no special value on the hobby market, despite what some novices mistakenly believe.